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School Reform News

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Good News on Reading Scores—Or Is It?

U.S. students lag in reading for information

Robert Holland

The Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), which examined the performance of 150,000 fourth-grade students throughout the world, found U.S. 11-year-olds ranked higher than their counterparts in 23 of the 34 other participating nations. The study, prepared by Boston College researchers, was funded by the U.S. Department of Education, the World Bank, and participating countries.

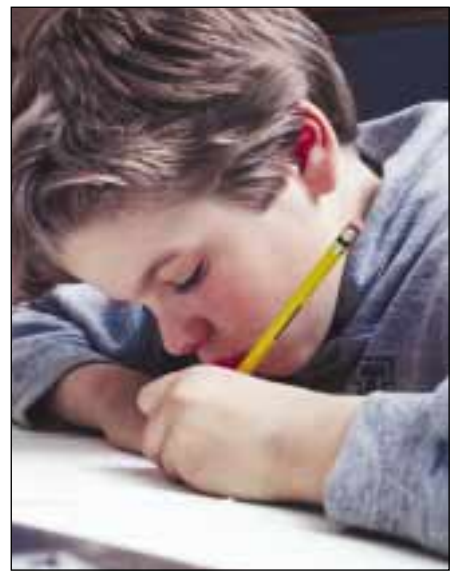
"The results from this study indicate that U.S. fourth-graders performed well on many reading tasks, but there is room for improvement," said Grover Whitehurst, director of the U.S. Department of Education's Institute for Education Sciences. "In the United States there are significant gaps in reading literacy achievement between racial/ethnic groups, between students in high poverty schools and other public schools, and also between girls and boys."

The gender gap that disfavors boys is

READING continued on page 4

Too Many Students Flunk Writing

Panel calls for a "writing revolution"



George A. Clowes

In response to growing concerns in the business, education, and policy-making communities about the low level of student writing skills, a blue-ribbon panel is recommending a writing agenda for the nation that includes doubling the time most K-12 students currently spend on writing, requiring all prospective teachers to be grounded in the theory and practice of writing as a condition of licensure, and making sure a comprehensive writing policy is part of all state standards.

WRITING continued on page 6

Ed. Failures Imperil Manufacturing

George A. Clowes

A looming shortage of highly skilled employees threatens to undercut the competitiveness of U.S. manufacturing and weaken the economy, according to a study released in April by the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM).

The projected shortfall is attributed to a combination of factors: demographics, technology, the negative image of manufacturing portrayed on television, and the failure of the educational system to keep up with the needs of manufacturers.

According to a study conducted by the Educational Testing Service, the U.S. economy as a whole will face a growing shortage of skilled workers in the coming decade as the Baby Boom generation begins to retire in large numbers. The shortage for jobs requiring at least some degree of post-secondary education or training is projected to exceed 10 million by 2020.

To begin to address the problem, NAM

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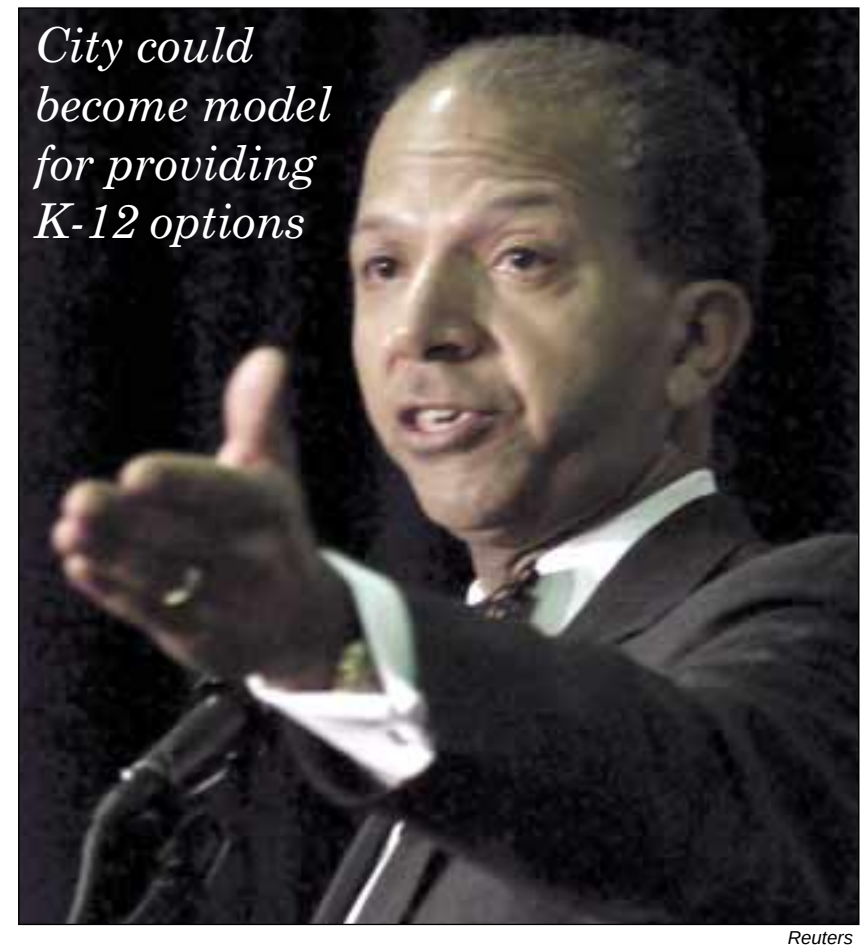
DC Leaders Announce Support for Vouchers

City could become model for providing K-12 options



Reuters

Washington, DC Mayor Anthony Williams declared his commitment to working "on a balanced approach to school choice" with the Bush administration.

Kelly Amis Stewart

A new day is dawning for K-12 education in the nation's capital.

At a May 1 event to celebrate National Charter Schools Week and announce the formation of a new charter school association for the District of Columbia, Mayor Anthony Williams, School Board President Peggy Cooper Cafritz, and Councilman Kevin Chavous—head of the district's committee on education—took the podium one after another to express their support for expanded school choice not just through charter schools, but through federally funded private

DC VOUCHERS continued on page 16

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Special Ed Bill Brings Valuable Reforms, No Choice

Don Soifer

Being the parent of a disabled child can never be an easy task, and the rules governing the federal special education system often add onerous new levels to the challenge. Special education teachers, too, have expressed concerns about disability education law. And increasingly, concerns have been raised about non-disabled children finding themselves stuck in special education classes after being incorrectly diagnosed as disabled.

A bill to reauthorize the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) passed the House floor on April 30 and aims to address those concerns. The measure was developed by House Education Reform Subcommittee Chairman Michael Castle (R-Delaware) and several colleagues.

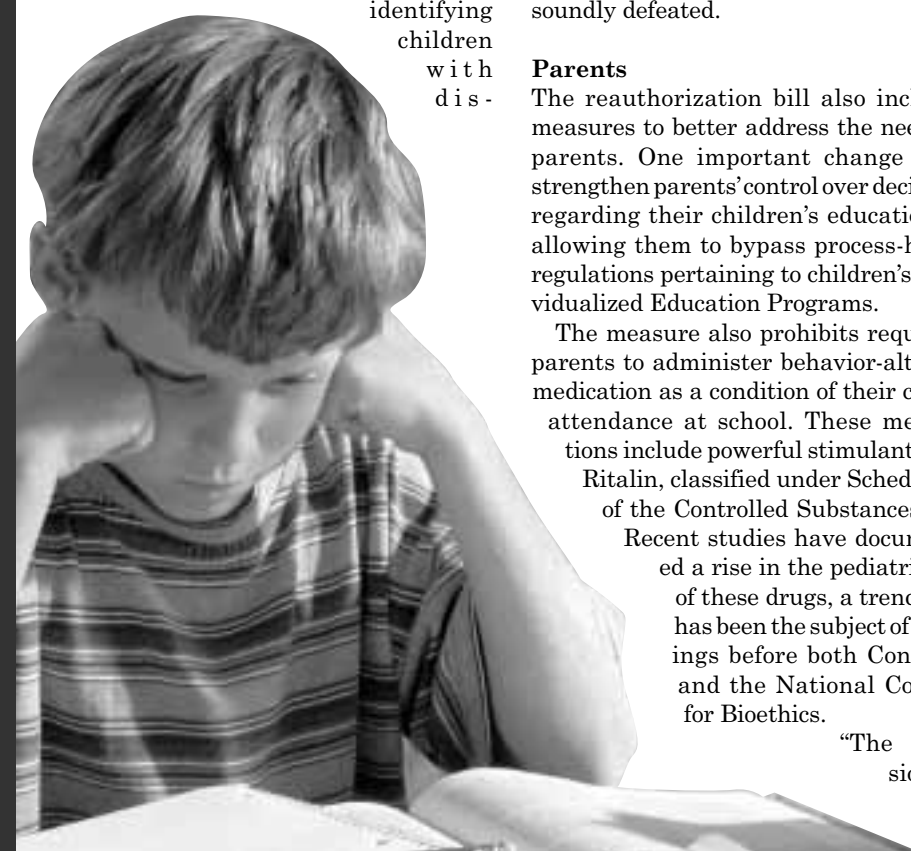
Children

Education Secretary Rod Paige, Castle, and others have expressed concern about widespread misidentification and mislabeling, especially of minority students.

"For minority students, misclassification or inappropriate placement in special education programs can have significant adverse consequences, particularly when these students are being removed from regular education settings and denied access to the core curriculum," said Paige at an earlier hearing on the subject.

The reauthorization bill includes a number of important reforms designed to address the mislabeling of children as disabled. One prominent change is to end reliance on controversial "IQ discrepancy" models for identifying children with disabilities. Schools must not "use any single measure or assessment as the sole criterion" for labeling a child as disabled, and assessments must be "selected and administered so as not to be discriminatory on a racial or cultural basis."

Another prominent change is to emphasize early intervention strategies. These interventions would be aimed at correcting reading deficiencies before children are—sometimes incorrectly—identified as disabled. School districts will be granted flexibility to use up to 15 percent of their federal IDEA funds for such prereferral services. Lawmakers anticipate this change would help children avoid becoming trapped in a system that appears to worry little about whether students ever graduate from special education programs.



"The most prominent casualty of the House vote on the reauthorization measure was school choice for children with disabilities."

Representative Tom Tancredo (R-Colorado) offered an amendment that sought to change the definition for the largest category of disability, Specific Learning Disability, to require any diagnosis be based on physical and scientific evidence and not on "subjective criteria." The measure, which met with acrimony from much of the disability community, was soundly defeated.

Parents

The reauthorization bill also includes measures to better address the needs of parents. One important change is to strengthen parents' control over decisions regarding their children's education by allowing them to bypass process-heavy regulations pertaining to children's Individualized Education Programs.

The measure also prohibits requiring parents to administer behavior-altering medication as a condition of their child's attendance at school. These medications include powerful stimulants like Ritalin, classified under Schedule II of the Controlled Substances Act. Recent studies have documented a rise in the pediatric use of these drugs, a trend that has been the subject of hearings before both Congress and the National Council for Bioethics.

"The decision to medicate a child belongs in the hands of parents and their child's pediatrician or psychiatrist, not public school system administrators," explained Representative Max Burns (R-Georgia), who sponsored this provision. "No parent should be forced to medicate a child in order for that child to attend school."

Teachers

The bill, HR 1350, offers new relief to special education teachers by reducing the heavy paperwork demands currently placed on them. For example, the bill offers parents the option of extending the timeframe of their child's Individualized Education Plan to three years; currently, IEPs must be completely rewritten every year.

Teachers also would benefit from provisions that ease federal regulations dictating how school officials are permitted to discipline special education students. The new rules would allow uniform discipline for all children. School officials would be permitted to suspend special education students if necessary to ensure school safety.

School Choice

The most prominent casualty of the House vote on the reauthorization measure was school choice for children with disabilities. Traditional opponents of choice had joined disability advocates to form a unified coalition opposed to choice in special education.

Representative Jim DeMint (R-South Carolina) sponsored the leading choice proposal, defeated by a vote of 240-182. The DeMint plan would have allowed states to develop new, customized education systems for children with special needs and would have permitted plans modeled after Florida's McKay scholarship program. Following the vote, DeMint voiced dismay at the outcome.

"If there has ever been an opportunity to make a good, rational, and compassionate argument for money following students, it is in the area of special education," he said. "More than any other, special needs students require customized, personalized service."

A second choice plan, authored by Representative Marilyn Musgrave (R-Colorado), lost by a similar margin.

One harshly worded letter attacking the measure was signed by 36 groups, including the National Education Association, American Federation of Teachers, National PTA, Council for Exceptional Children, and People for the American Way.

"It would be inappropriate to fund any voucher program," the letter said, "since they lack scientific, research-based evidence of effectiveness."

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Reading Scores

continued from page 1

not an exclusively American phenomenon. Fourth-grade girls were better readers than boys in every country participating in the study. That disparity has not drawn nearly as much attention from advocates of social equality as has the general male advantage in mathematics.

Substantial Achievement Gaps

Other gaps are more distinctly American. While hailing "some pretty good news" in the overall report, the Progressive Policy Institute noted the "real bad news" is "more evidence that achievement gaps between white and minority and higher- and lower-income students within the United States are substantial.

"For example, while 64 percent of students in the lowest-poverty schools reach the upper quartile international benchmark, only 14 percent of those in the higher-poverty schools do so," noted the Institute. "White students scored on average 565 points on the test's scale, while black students scored only 502 and Hispanic students 517. In essence, it is more evidence that U.S. averages are being pulled down by the enormous disparities in American public education and should be cause for more action to rectify these problems."

President George W. Bush's top reading advisor, G. Reid Lyon of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, expressed disappointment the study showed little or no change in the level of reading achievement by U.S. students from two studies done during the past decade.

"That's very concerning," he said in an interview with George Archibald of *The Washington Times*. "We've still got stagnant rates, and it's a bit bothersome when we're comparing ourselves internationally, while at the same time we lose sight of the kids who aren't getting it in this country."

As Good As It Gets

Another factor tempering the modicum of good news in the PIRLS report is that other studies have indicated fourth grade often is as good as it gets with regard to comparative academic performance of U.S. K-12 students.

For instance, U.S. fourth-graders rated near the top in the Third International Math and Science Study, but U.S. high school seniors ranked near the bottom. The same pattern has held true in National Assessment of Educational Progress measures of proficiency in basic subjects.

In the PIRLS study, U.S. fourth-graders scored high on reading fictional stories. Only children from Sweden, Holland, and England scored higher. However, the American 11-year-olds ranked much lower—only 13th—on their ability to understand informational text. Among the G-8 industrialized nations with which the U.S. is most often compared, U.S. fourth-graders were fifth out of seven in reading for information.

Almost all (95 percent) of American children attend schools that profess to emphasize reading, compared with the international average of 78 percent. In addition, 65 percent of the American pupils receive more than six hours of reading instruction a week, as opposed to the international average of 28 percent.

Whether U.S. schools teach reading by the most effective means is a question the PIRLS study does not address. (See "The 'Crayola Curriculum,'" page 7.)

Sweden had the highest achievement of all participating countries, with Swedish pupils ranking first in reading both informational and fictional material.

The PIRLS study also showed students enrolled in private schools in the U.S. scored significantly higher in reading than did their peers in public schools.

Robert Holland is a senior fellow with the Lexington Institute, a public policy think tank in Arlington, Virginia. His e-mail address is **rholl1176@yahoo.com**.

INTERNET INFO

The April 2003 report from the U.S. Department of Education, "International Comparisons in Fourth-Grade Reading Literacy: Findings from the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) of 2001," is available online at **http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2003/2003073.pdf**.

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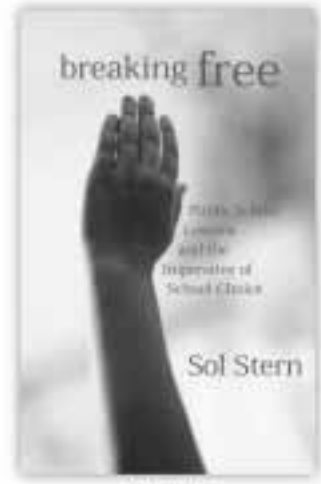
–Chester E. Finn, Jr., former Assistant Secretary of Education

Sol Stern grew up in the South Bronx and attended New York City public schools in the 1940s and 1950s, receiving the best education that America's urban public schools had to offer at the time, strong on classroom fundamentals and affirming a clear vision of America's civic culture. In *Breaking Free*, he contrasts his experience with that of his two sons, both of whom recently attended some of New York's elite public schools. While spending time in these schools, he discovered things that should concern not only parents, but all Americans—instruction shaped by "progressive" fads and politically correct clichés; dictatorial unions that protect inept teachers; and a self protective bureaucracy that puts the interests of employees ahead of the needs of the students.



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If these were the best public schools, Stern thought, the worst were unimaginable. He was right.

In his quest to understand what has gone wrong with American education, Stern also visited Catholic schools that were successfully educating minority and underprivileged children in New York. He vividly describes how these cash-starved schools are performing small miracles every day with children the public schools have betrayed or given up on. Moving on to Milwaukee and Cleveland, Stern found that voucher programs there have rescued large numbers of poor minority children from violent, chaotic and failing public schools and allowed them to attend parochial and private schools where high expectations often result in high achievement.

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Writing Skills

continued from page 1

The April 2003 report, "The Neglected 'R': The Need for a Writing Revolution," was produced by the National Commission on Writing in America's Schools and Colleges, a panel established by the College Board last September and made up largely of K-12 and college-level educators and administrators.

"Writing must be an important focus beginning in elementary school," said Commission Chair C. Peter Magrath, president of the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges. "The writing weaknesses of incoming college students cost our campuses up to $1 billion annually. And business leaders complain about the writing skills of new employees."

In detailing the current state of writing in U.S. schools, it becomes obvious why the report was titled "The Neglected 'R'":

- Most fourth-grade students spend less than three hours a week writing, which is approximately the same amount of time *per day* they spend watching television.
- Nearly 66 percent of high school seniors do not write a three-page paper as often as once a month for their English teachers.
- Three-quarters of high school seniors never receive a writing assignment in history or social studies.
- The senior research project has become an educational curiosity, something rarely assigned because teachers do not have time to correct such projects.

None of these findings would surprise Will Fitzhugh, president of the National Writing Board and founder and editor of *The Concord Review*, a quarterly journal of history research papers written by high school students. Since 1987, the *Review* has published more than 500 papers—averaging 5,000 words in length, with endnotes and bibliography—by students from 42 states and 33 countries.

"It seems likely that the history research paper at the high school level is now an endangered species," wrote Fitzhugh in January 2002. Among the contributing factors he cited were "fascination with PowerPoint presentations," a lack of time for teachers to read the papers, and "a notable absence of concern for term papers in virtually all the work on state standards."

Earlier Findings Similar

In November 2002, *The Concord Review* published a "History Research Paper Study" that included a nationwide survey of high school teachers. The study's key findings presaged those of the National Commission:

- An overwhelming majority (95 percent) of teachers surveyed believe that writing a research term paper is important or very important; but
- Three out of five (62 percent) never assign a paper of 3,000-5,000 words; and
- Four out of five (81 percent) never assign a paper of more than 5,000 words.

The principal reasons cited for not assigning long papers were the amount of time required for reading and grading the papers, and the fact that this time almost always had to be taken from the teacher's personal time in the evenings or on weekends.

"The Neglected 'R'" report cites 1998 writing test data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), which show that at grades 4, 8, and 12, only about one U.S. student in five is rated as a "Proficient" writer and only one student in 100 is rated as an "Advanced" writer. By NAEP standards, a "Proficient" writer is one who can write "precise, engaging, and coherent" prose.

"By grade 12, most students are producing relatively immature and unsophisticated writing," concluded the report, adding that the writing of more

C. Peter Magrath

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than one in five high school seniors is riddled with errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

ACT Survey: Grammar Not Emphasized

To improve the teaching of writing, the National Commission calls for increasing the financial resources devoted to writing. It warns, "Writing will not be improved on the cheap or by hectoring teachers." However, a recent survey conducted by the College Board's rival, ACT Inc., suggests the teaching of writing could be improved dramatically simply by having high school teachers emphasize that grammar and usage skills are important.

The ACT survey was conducted on high school teachers and college faculty who teach entry-level courses. The survey results, announced in early April, showed a major disagreement between these two groups regarding the importance of grammar and usage skills. Out of six writing skills categories, grammar and usage rank first in importance at the college level, but last in importance at the high school level, where they receive the least instructional attention.

"When high school teachers and curriculum specialists understand what colleges expect students to know and be able to do, they can use these expectations to review their high school English courses to make sure they are focusing on the rigorous skills needed in college," said Cynthia Schmeiser, ACT's vice president for development.

"Most fourth-grade students spend less than three hours a week writing, which is approximately the same amount of time *per day* they spend watching television."

Low Priority in Ed Schools

Recent studies suggest as many as half of today's college freshmen must take at least one remedial course in college, with more than four in 10 of these taking a remedial course in writing. A 2002 Public Agenda survey reported three out of four employers and college professors rated public school graduates as having only "fair" or "poor" skills with regard to grammar, spelling, and writing clearly.

Why would K-12 teachers put a low priority on grammar and usage skills? Because that's what they are taught to do by their professors in schools of education, according to another Public Agenda survey conducted in 1997. Only one in five professors of education said it is "absolutely essential" to produce teachers who stress correct spelling, grammar, and punctuation.

George A. Clowes is managing editor of School Reform News. *His email address is* **clowes@heartland.org**.

The Crayola Curriculum

After touring hundreds of early-grade classrooms during the designated reading period a few years ago, education writer Mike Schmoker generally found students sitting in small, unsupervised groups, supposedly involved in learning activities. But they weren't reading.

"Students were not reading, they weren't writing about what they had read, they weren't learning the alphabet or its corresponding sounds; they weren't learning words or sentences or how to read short texts," he wrote in *Education Week*.

"They were coloring," Schmoker continued. "Coloring on a scale unimaginable to us before these classroom tours. The crayons were ever-present. Sometimes, students were cutting or building things out of paper (which they had colored) or just talking quietly while sitting at 'activity centers' that were presumably for the purpose of promoting reading and writing skills."

Schmoker's observations are echoed by Kati Haycock, director of the Education Trust, who toured thousands of classrooms in disadvantaged schools. She confessed she and her colleagues were "stunned" that "kids are given more coloring assignments than mathematics and writing assignments."

The "Crayola Curriculum," as Schmoker dubbed it, is taking over in high schools, too, according to college English teacher Donna Harrington-Lueker. Last year, she was startled to see a teacher workshop that promoted the teaching of writing by using early grade picture books with high school students. After checking with teachers, browsing professional journals, and looking at online teacher postings, she found high school writing assignments were "long on fun but remarkably short on writing.

"For example, someone who teaches an honors class for high school freshmen posts a short-story project that allows students 13 options, only a handful of which involve actual writing," she wrote in *USA Today*. "Among the choices students are offered: create a map to illustrate the story's setting, make a game to show the story's theme, put together a collage from magazine photographs, or assemble a scrapbook or photograph album for the character."

While these projects are fun for students and easy for teachers to grade, notes Harrington-Lueker, "kids are often showing up at college unable to write."

FOR MORE INFORMATION ...

The April 2003 report published by the National Commission on Writing in America's Schools and Colleges, "The Neglected 'R': The Need for a Writing Revolution," is available online at **http://www.writingcommission.org/prod_downloads/writingcom/neglectedr.pdf**.

The November 2002 report published by *The Concord Review*, "History Research Paper Study," is available online at **http://www.tcr.org/historytcr.pdf**.

The ACT Inc. news release of April 8, 2003, regarding the survey of high school teachers and college instructors, is available online at **http://www.act.org/news/releases/2003/4-08-03.html**.

Information about Public Agenda's surveys is available at **http://www.publicagenda.org**.

The October 24, 2001 article by Mike Schmoker, "The 'Crayola Curriculum,'" was published in *Education Week* and is available online at **http://www.edweek.org/ew/newstory.cfm?slug=08schmoker.h21**.

The September 16, 2002 op-ed by Donna Harrington-Lueker, "'Crayola Curriculum' Takes Over," was published in *USA Today* and is available online at **http://www.usatoday.com/news/opinion/2002-09-16-op-ed-harrington_x.htm**.

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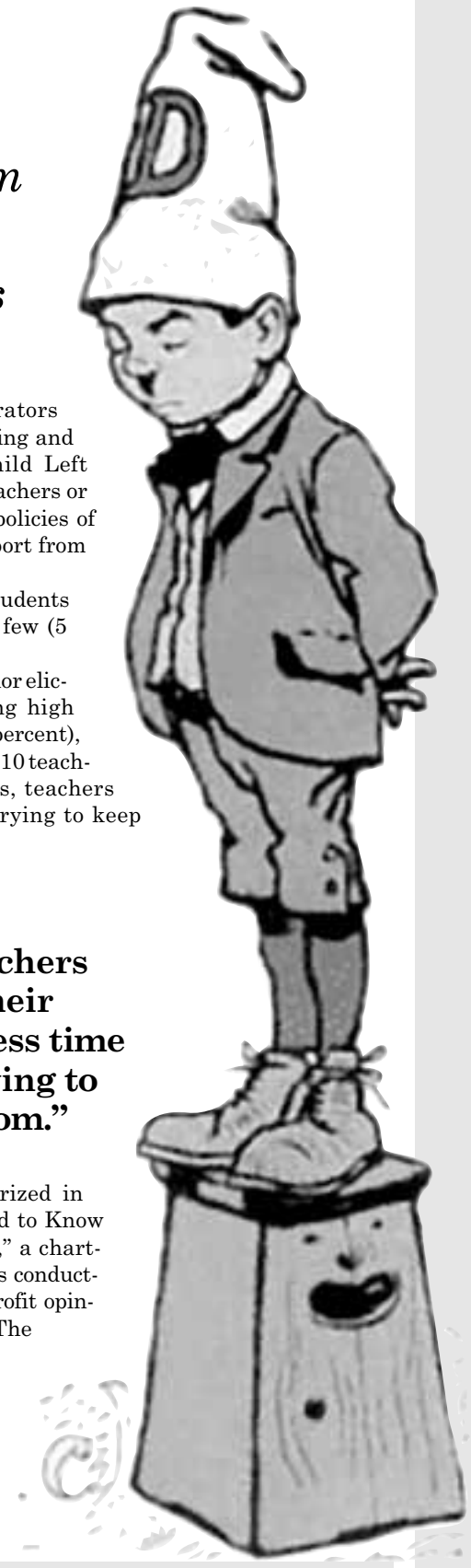
Disrespectful Students More of a Concern than Testing

Twelve findings from opinion surveys about public schools



George A. Clowes

While some educators and administrators have raised concerns about the testing and accountability provisions of the No Child Left Behind Act, there's no nostalgia among teachers or others for a return to the pre-standards policies of the past, according to a new summary report from Public Agenda.

According to the report, 92 percent of students say they take tests seriously, and only a few (5 percent) feel overwhelmed by pressure.

By contrast, disrespectful student behavior elicits much higher levels of concern among high school teachers (82 percent), students (70 percent), and parents (56 percent). More than four in 10 teachers (43 percent) say that in their schools, teachers spend less time teaching than they do trying to keep order in the classroom.

"More than four in 10 teachers (43 percent) say that in their schools, teachers spend less time teaching than they do trying to keep order in the classroom."

These and other findings are summarized in "Where We Are Now: 12 Things You Need to Know about Public Opinion and Public Schools," a chart-filled review of Americans' views on schools conducted by Public Agenda, a nonpartisan, nonprofit opinion research and policy organization. The report, funded by Washington Mutual, draws on more than 25 major opinion studies of the key stakeholders in education: parents, students, teachers, school leaders, employers, and college professors.

"The standards movement has taken hold in American schools and continues to enjoy broad support. But there are some troublesome fault lines," said Public Agenda's president, Deborah Wadsworth. "Teachers in particular seem to be caught between a rock and a hard place. They believe in higher standards but often feel they can't count on students to make the effort or parents and administrators to back them up. Meanwhile, employers and professors still have major complaints about youngsters' writing and basic math skills."

George A. Clowes is managing editor of School Reform News. *His email address is* **clowes@heartland.org**.

FINDING 1 The public—including parents, teachers, and students—believes setting standards and enforcing them promotes learning. Social promotion, they say, harms kids.

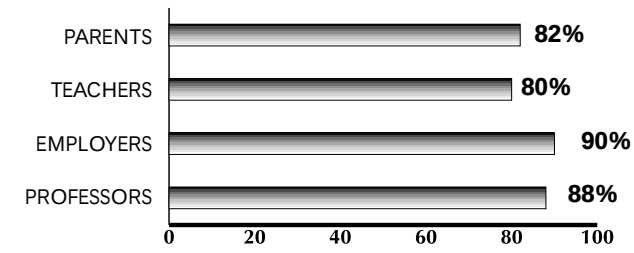
Only 16 percent of Americans believe most students achieve their full education potential; the vast majority (81 percent) are convinced most youngsters achieve only a small part of that potential. Student surveys support that view, with 71 percent saying they put out only the bare minimum of effort needed to get by in school.

Note: In the report, each finding is accompanied by about 10 different charts.

Source for all charts: Public Agenda

Strong Support For Raising Standards

% who agree having guidelines for what students should learn and know helps improve students' academic performance

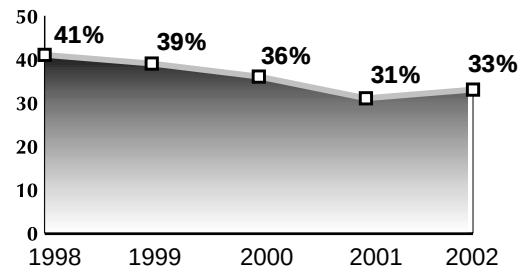


FINDING 2 Standards and promotion policies have changed in recent years, and attitudes about local schools have improved. Even so, many students still move ahead without acquiring needed skills.

Despite efforts to raise standards, nearly half of teachers say many youngsters in their schools get diplomas even though they don't have the needed skills.

Social Promotion Is Declining

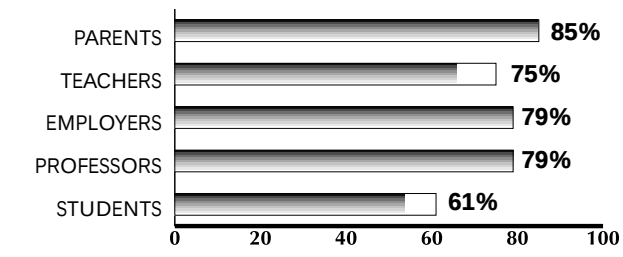
% of teachers who say schools automatically promote students who have reached a maximum age



FINDING 3 The vast majority of parents and teachers say standardized tests are useful, and few students are overly anxious about them. But respondents also think tests can be misused, and many say there's too much emphasis on them.

Other Benefits As Well

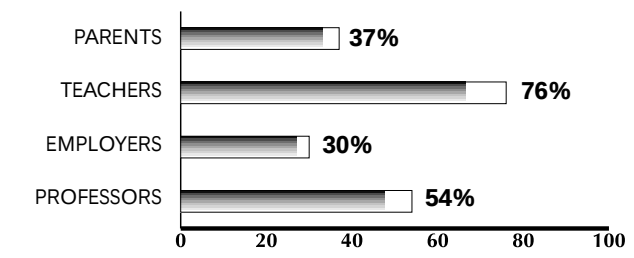
% who agree students work harder if they have to pass a test for promotion



FINDING 4 While teachers support high academic standards, they have qualms about some aspects of testing.

Should Teacher Pay Be Tied To Student Achievement?

% who say it's a bad idea to tie financial incentives for teachers and principals to student achievement



INTERNET INFO

A copy of the Public Agenda report, "Where We Are Now: 12 Things You Need to Know about Public Opinion and Public Schools," is available online at **http://www.publicagenda.org/aboutpa/pdf/where_we_are_now_combined.pdf**.

The first 36 pages of the report provide the 12 findings, each with multiple charts, while the remaining 80 pages provide details of the supporting survey data.

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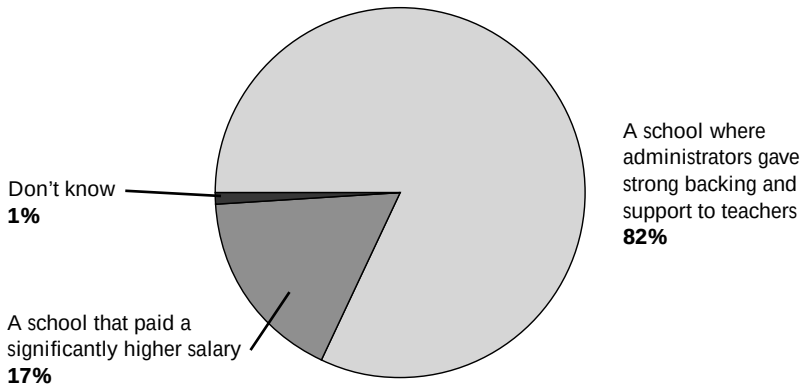
FINDING 5 Teachers are troubled by lack of parental support and poor student behavior. Teachers also say their views are generally ignored by decision makers.

Money Can't Buy Me Love

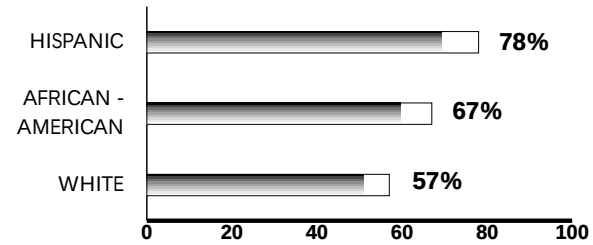
Given the choice, teachers say they would prefer to work in:


Don't know
1%
A school that paid a significantly higher salary
17%
A school where administrators gave strong backing and support to teachers
82%

FINDING 6 Americans say all students need the basics, and parents want their own children prepared for college. For most, a college diploma is as indispensable as a high school diploma used to be.

Great Expectations

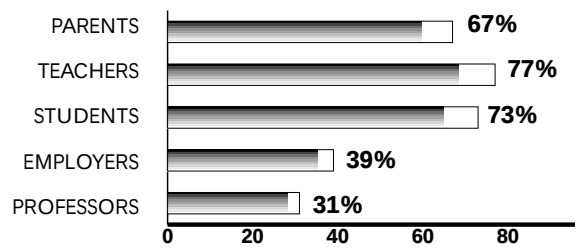
% of high school parents who say a college education is absolutely essential for my child



FINDING 7 There is a dramatic gap between the way employers and college professors rate high school graduates and the way parents and teachers view them.

What Does A Diploma Guarantee?

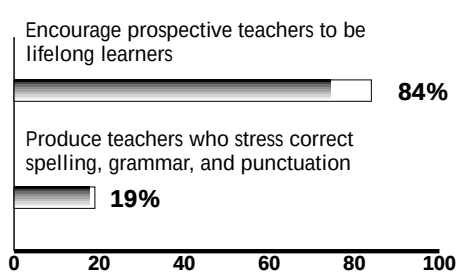
% who say a high school diploma means that the typical student has at least learned the basics



FINDING 8 The vast majority of employers and professors continue to have serious doubts about public school graduates' basic skills—especially when it comes to writing.

For Schools of Education, Stressing Grammar and Spelling Is Low Priority

% of professors of education who say it is "absolutely essential" to:



FINDING 9 Teachers say lack of parental involvement is a serious problem. According to teachers and parents, parental involvement should focus on what goes on at home rather than on school management issues.

Too Many Parents Are AWOL

% of teachers who say they have a serious problem with:

Parents who fail to set limits and create structure at home for their kids	**83%**
Parents who refuse to hold their kids accountable for their behavior or academic performance	**81%**

FINDING 10 Teachers, parents, and students continue to voice concern about the rough-edged, uncivil atmosphere in many high schools. Few see high schools as places of respect or civility.

Troubled Classrooms

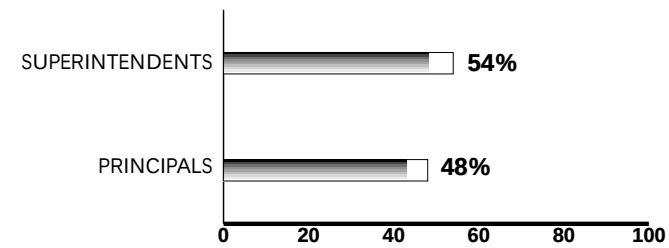
% of high school students who say:

Teachers spend more tme trying to keep order in the classroom than teaching	**49%**
In my high school, most students treat teachers with respect	**19%**

FINDING 11 Superintendents and principals say their biggest problems are politics and bureaucracy. Most want more autonomy over their own schools.

Having To Work Around the System

% of superintendents and principals who say they must work around the system when trying to get things done



FINDING 12 Holding schools and educators directly accountable for student achievement is still uncommon. Teachers and principals have doubts about it, while parents and the public tend to support it.

Strong Support For Tutoring And Transfers

If a school doesn't show progress toward meeting standards, Americans would favor:

Offering tutoring by private providers	**90%**
Offering the choice to transfer to another school in the district	**86%**
Not renewing contracts of the principal or teachers	**56%**

Phi Delta Kappan/Gallup Poll 2002

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The Friedman Report

About the Milton and Rose D. Friedman Foundation

The Milton and Rose D. Friedman Foundation is a nonprofit, 501(c)(3) organization established in 1996 by Milton and Rose Friedman. The origins of the foundation lie in the Friedmans' long-standing concern about the serious deficiencies in America's elementary and secondary public schools. The best way to improve the quality of education, they believe, is to enable all parents to have a truly free choice of the schools that their children attend. The Friedman Foundation works to build upon this vision, clarify its meaning to the general public, and amplify the national call for true education reform through school choice. Contact us at www.friedmanfoundation.org for more information.

The Milton & Rose D. Friedman Foundation
One American Square #1760
Indianapolis, IN 46282

AN EYE ON THE OPPOSITION

Laura J. Swartley

Those who work in school choice advocacy are undoubtedly familiar with the cleverly written and impeccably researched insider's knowledge on teacher unions that hits their email inboxes every week from the Education Intelligence Agency.

The man who pens these digests, Mike Antonucci, knew a thing or two about strategy before tackling the unions. He began his writing career as a military historian for such publications as *History Today, Military History, Civil War Times Illustrated,* and *Command*. Before that he served in the U.S. Air Force as an instructor navigator.

By 1993, Antonucci was converting his experience in deciphering intelligence data to studying the inner sanctum of the California Teachers Association—an affiliate of the National Education Association—for a California state legislature newsletter.

"It soon became apparent that the union's influence in California was replicated in many other states," says Antonucci. "By 1997, the list was growing, interest was high, and my material began appearing in mainstream news and political publications."

At this point, Antonucci created the Education Intelligence Agency and began publishing the *EIA Communiqué*, which now counts its readership in the tens of thousands. He monitors what the unions say and do, attends their national conferences, and reports on any activities that affect teachers and teaching—such as the recently uncovered alleged corruption in the DC teacher union ranks.

"I think of the *Communiqué* as the *Consumer Reports* on the NEA and AFT," says Antonucci. "Teachers' unions are selling a product: job security. For that product, they exact a price, not only in dues, but in freedom.

"The walls the unions build to protect public school teachers from the penalties of the marketplace also prevent teachers from participating in its benefits."

While mediocre and low-quality teachers benefit from the stability the union provides, Antonucci notes, good and exceptional teachers languish in a murky sea of bureaucracy, their creative freedom and chance to become true professionals stifled. In short, he believes, "The unions' entire reason for existing is to tell us what we can't do in public education," rather than what we can do to improve public education for teachers and students.

Antonucci does not espouse any one form of education reform. He simply feels the atmosphere of public education must change so "people are free to create the best possible school." He thinks higher education in America provides a perfect model.

"Having one Harvard is wonderful," he says. "But even if we could turn every school into Harvard, it wouldn't be desirable because we wouldn't have MIT, or the University of Chicago, or the California Institute of the Arts."

He does consider himself the recipient of a "voucher, albeit a plan that has been in place for over 100 years." In the 1970s, when he was attending high school at the prestigious Regis High School in New York City, his tuition was paid entirely by private donations.

Those interested in receiving the EIA Communiqué *may sign up for it at* **http://www.eiaonline.com** *or by sending an email request to* **education intel@aol.com**.

School Choice Roundup

George A. Clowes and Laura J. Swartley

ALABAMA

Register: State Should Consider Vouchers

Noting that as many as 20 other states are considering vouchers as a way to improve failing schools, the editorial board of the *Mobile Register* recently suggested "Alabama as well ought to consider vouchers and other forms of choice."

Indeed, the board continued, the Yellowhammer State should be "more ripe for choice" because of the problems it is having with its education budget, which merit wholesale reform rather than "mere tinkering at the edges." Polls consistently show large majorities of blacks and Hispanics support the idea of vouchers.

"Children do not deserve to be trapped in failing systems," argued the board, and so it "makes sense" for the recently approved voucher bill in Colorado to permit low-income children to attend private or religious schools of their choice.

"Parents deserve the opportunity to choose a better future for their children," the editors opined. "And the public at large will benefit from having parents more engaged in securing an education more suited to their individual children's needs."

Mobile Register
April 12, 2003

ARIZONA

House Rejects Education Tax Credits

A bill to expand educational opportunities for low-income students was defeated by a 31-27 vote of the Arizona House on April 9. SB 1263, which had already been approved by the Senate, would have allowed corporations to take a credit on their taxes for donations to organizations that provide scholarships for low-income children to transfer from a public school to a private school. From an initial cap of $10 million a year, the credits would grow to $50 million by 2008.

Among the arguments that won the sympathy of a majority of lawmakers:

- Although the maximum scholarship was capped at 60 percent of the state's per-pupil funding average of about $4,500, opponents argued the program would not save the state money.
- House Minority Leader John Loredo (D-Phoenix) argued poor families, being poor, wouldn't be able to take advantage of the program.
- Rep. Marion McClure (R-Tucson) argued poor children who did take advantage of the program would be teased by more affluent children.

Arizona Republic
April 10, 2003

COLORADO

Poll Shows Support for Tax Credits

Supporters of tax credits are pointing to the positive results of a recent poll as they push for passage of House Bill 1137, a measure that would create income tax credits for donations to organizations that provide scholarships to help children from low-income families transfer from public to private schools.

The poll was commissioned by the Colorado Alliance for Reform in Education (CARE), a school choice advo-

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cacy group. The poll of 603 registered Colorado voters, conducted in March, indicates 63 percent support K-12 tuition tax credits. Support is higher among minority voters, with 82 percent of black voters and 64 percent of Hispanic voters supporting the credits.

Rocky Mountain News
April 26, 2003

College Voucher Bill Killed

Acknowledging he didn't have the votes to get his bill to create college vouchers out of the Colorado House Appropriations Committee, House Majority Leader Keith King (R-Colorado Springs) asked for the bill to be tabled, effectively killing it for the current session.

The measure, House Bill 1336, would have converted Colorado's higher education funding from direct grants to colleges into vouchers for college students, who would receive $3,200 annually for four years.

Although the plan received support from many college and university officials, some legislators were concerned the measure would increase the state's share of higher education funding by $34 million next year. But King said he would try again next year.

Except for Centennial Rep. Nancy Spence's voucher bill, signed by Governor Bill Owens in April, K-12 tax credit and voucher bills did not win approval in this year's session of the Colorado legislature.

The Coloradoan
May 1, 2003
Denver Post
May 4, 2003

CONNECTICUT

Town Looking at Vouchers as Money-Saver

The Town Council of Berlin, Connecticut is looking at school vouchers as a possible money-saving measure. Town attorney Tim Sullivan is examining whether such a plan would be permitted and will report his findings back to the council in May.

The issue came up at a recent town hearing, when town councilors said it was cheaper for the town to send children to a private school, St. Paul's School, than to have them attend Berlin public schools. Town councilor Don Geschimsky noted many other states have voucher systems and, regardless of whether the proposal was "right, wrong or indifferent," it ought to be looked into.

"If this is legal, we would be the first town in the state to do this," he told the *New Berlin Herald*.

New Berlin Herald
April 24, 2003

FLORIDA

Voucher Proposals Fail

Among the legislation that failed to pass in the 2003 regular session of the Florida legislature, which adjourned on May 2, were the following proposals:

- Implementation of a class size reduction amendment to the Florida Constitution that was approved by voters last year; one of the ways lawmakers considered reducing class size was through an expansion of the state's voucher program.
- Doubling of the size of a corporate tax credit program that provides private school scholarships to children in low-income families.

Sarasota Herald-Tribune
May 3, 2003

LOUISIANA

Opposition Kills Push for Vouchers

Two voucher proposals were raised to address the problem of failing schools in Louisiana this year, but no voucher bill was approved.

In Baton Rouge and New Orleans combined, 23 schools were deemed unacceptable due to "dismal scores, poor dropout and attendance rates" as of March 31. By Fall, as many as 103 could be deemed failing, according to the *Baton Rouge Advocate*. Two options—state takeover and school vouchers—were put forth as responses.

Competing voucher plans were proposed by the Archdiocese of New Orleans and Republican Governor Mike Foster. However, after a House panel on May 1 killed three bills that would have provided state money to send some students to private schools, the sponsor of Foster's bill said, "I can read the committee. This doesn't have a chance of passing." The *Baton Rouge Advocate* also concluded "the panel's opposition apparently kills the push for vouchers this year."

Despite the opposition to K-12 vouchers, a pre-school voucher program has been operating under the radar screen in Louisiana since the fall of 2001—before the U.S. Supreme Court ruled on the Cleveland voucher program, noted one reporter. Federal welfare money is used to fund the program, which initially allowed New Orleans parents of four-year-olds to choose the best pre-school—public or private, even religious—for their children. The program has since expanded to other parishes and now enrolls 1,000 children. The program is popular and growing, according to *The Times-Picayune*.

Baton Rouge Advocate
May 1, 2003
March 31, 2003
Times-Picayune
March 23, 2003

NEW YORK

Klein Cool to Business Push for Vouchers

The man who convinced a federal judge more competition was required in the software industry now has to convince New York business leaders more competition is not the answer to the problems they see with public education.

At a recent forum, New York Schools Chancellor Joel Klein and Caroline Kennedy Schlossberg—who are trying to get businesses to donate millions to public schools—recently listened to Conference Board President Richard Cavenagh make a push for vouchers. Cavenagh's survey of 23 corporate leaders in the city found nearly all support vouchers.

"They believe in competition; Joel has to overcome that," Cavenagh told the *New York Post*.

Vouchers aren't the answer, said Klein, although he wants to give parents more choices with charter schools. He said it's not possible to grow markets in human services like you can in capital.

"It's not a market-based situation," said Klein, who led the Justice Department's antitrust case against Microsoft.

New York Post
April 17, 2003

Five Catholic Schools to Close

Although New York parents have enthusiastically embraced privately funded scholarship programs like the School Choice Foundation and Angel Scholarships, only a few scholarships are available to help parents pay private school tuition—apparently not enough to keep struggling private schools from closing.

In February, the Diocese of Brooklyn and Queens said it would close five schools in June because of dropping enrollments and rising costs.

One of the schools is St. Rita's in Long Island City. According to principal Mary Sandoz, there are plenty of families in the area who want to send their children to the school, but not enough who can afford the $350 a month tuition. Nearly a quarter of the students at St. Rita's receive privately funded vouchers.

Newsday
April 21, 2003

RHODE ISLAND

Task Force Recommends More Options

A task force of educators, business leaders, charter school advocates, and union representatives called for the state to provide parents and students with more education options and to use non-traditional schools. These were among dozens of other recommendations—including a statewide curriculum for core subjects and empowering principals—included in the April report of the Governor's Education Transition Team.

The task force recognized vouchers are controversial, but said the state "would be wise to consider [vouchers] in an open forum and formulate a sound and defensible policy."

Other choice-related recommendations included removing the cap on charter schools and adoption of a statewide open enrollment policy, or at least interdistrict choice.

"We tend to reject a one-size-fits-all approach to public problems," noted the report. "But our public school system has essentially been just that—a monolithic system of schools that are very much alike."

Boston Globe
April 27, 2003

WISCONSIN

Push to Add More Voucher Schools

Two leading Republican lawmakers are pushing to allow private schools outside of the Milwaukee city limits to accept students from the city's voucher program. Representative Scott Jensen (Brookfield) and Senator Alberta Darling (River Hills) introduced their co-authored bill on April 10.

Currently, there are 90 schools available to voucher students in pre-school through middle school, but only 17 high school options. Enrollment in the voucher program peaks in kindergarten and drops off as grade level increases. School choice pioneer Howard Fuller believes more high schools must be made available. Capacity for high schoolers "is an issue," he said, "and it will continue to be an issue."

Meanwhile, 10 new high schools outside Milwaukee Public Schools could be created if the district is awarded a grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Some of the grant funds could be used to create as many as 2,000 seats in charter schools or private schools that participate in the voucher program.

Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel
April 10, 2003

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Cleveland Voucher Students Match Public School Peers

Private schools achieve with larger classes, lower costs

Krista Kafer

In March 2003, the Indiana Center for Evaluation at Indiana University released the newest of a seven-year series of evaluations of the Cleveland Scholarship and Tutoring Program (CSTP). By the end of third grade, this latest study found, students who attended private schools using vouchers performed at about the same level as comparable students who stayed behind in the public schools. In addition, larger classes were associated with higher achievement.

Enacted in 1995, the Cleveland Scholarship and Tutoring Program provides elementary school students with vouchers worth up to $2,250 for tuition at a private school of choice. Students may also choose to attend another public school or receive tutoring. Currently, about 5,200 students participate in the program.

In June 2002, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the program, ruling the use of public money to provide vouchers for students to attend private and religious schools does not violate the Establishment Clause of the U.S. Constitution.

The new study, "Evaluation of the Cleveland Scholarship and Tutoring Program 1998-2001," examines the characteristics of students who used the voucher to attend private school and compares them with the characteristics of non-participants.

Indiana University researcher Kim K. Metcalf and his colleagues looked at five groups of students: students using the scholarships; those who applied but did not receive a voucher; those who did not apply; those who received a scholarship but chose not to use it; and those who used vouchers for a year or two before returning to the public school system. Students in the study began as first graders in 1998 and were in the third grade in 2001. Researchers collected data by phone, face-to-face interviews, surveys, tests, and focus groups.

The study determined the population of scholarship winners was similar to the public school population; however, students using unclaimed lottery scholarships were less likely to be black, making the overall scholarship population less African-American than in the public schools. These late-award students were more likely to be from families with higher incomes than the initial lottery winners. The proportion of Hispanic and multiracial children in the voucher population was twice that of the public school student population.

Researchers also compared school environments in private and public schools, examining the characteristics of classrooms and teachers. In both types of schools, most teachers were certified and had completed some graduate coursework. Class sizes were larger in private schools. Larger classes were associated with higher achievement.

The study found students on scholarships did as well as their public school counterparts. Students who left the program and returned to the public schools had been faring worse academically than other students in the study, and they continued to do so in the public schools.

The previous study, published in September 2001, concluded that "students who entered the Scholarship Program as kindergartners were achieving at significantly higher levels than other students when they entered first grade" and that, while public school students made academic gains in the first grade, students who used vouchers for three years remained ahead academically.

An earlier study of Cleveland voucher students, published in September 1999, had found a small but statistically significant improvement in language and science achievement scores of voucher students who attended existing, rather than new, private schools after two years.

The latest study raises a number of questions:

- How do the private schools in the program achieve academic results similar to the public schools at a fraction of the per-pupil cost?
- Why is higher achievement associated with *larger* class sizes?
- What is the long-term trend?

The study provides a partial answer to the last question.

"Although it is not statistically significant in the data available to date, there is some evidence of a pattern of slightly greater annual achievement growth among students who have used a scholarship continuously since kindergarten," note the study's authors. "If this pattern continues, the achievement of this group of students may become noticeably, and meaningfully, higher than that of public school students."

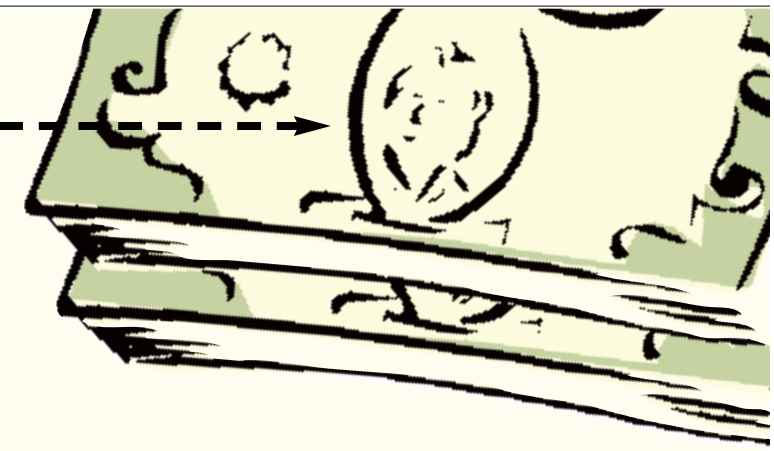
However, the researchers point out, an additional three to five years of study are needed to confirm—or discount—the pattern of annual achievement growth.

Krista Kafer is senior policy analyst for education at The Heritage Foundation. Her email address is **krista.kafer@heritage.org**.

INTERNET INFO

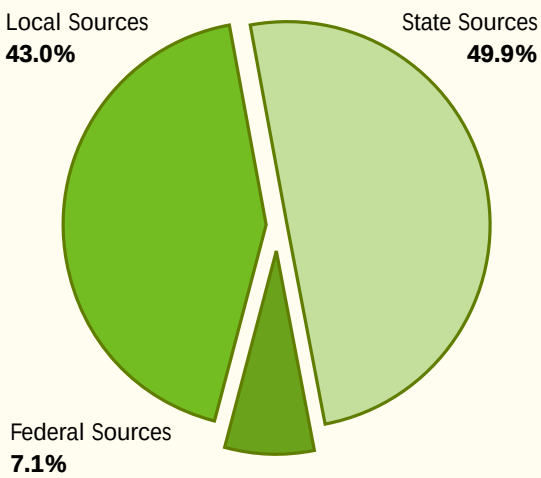
The March 2003 report from the Indiana Center for Evaluation at Indiana University, "Evaluation of the Cleveland Scholarship and Tutoring Program 1998-2001," is available online under "Report Links" at **http://www.indiana.edu/~iuice/**.
Four earlier reports also are available.

Where Do Public Education Dollars Go?



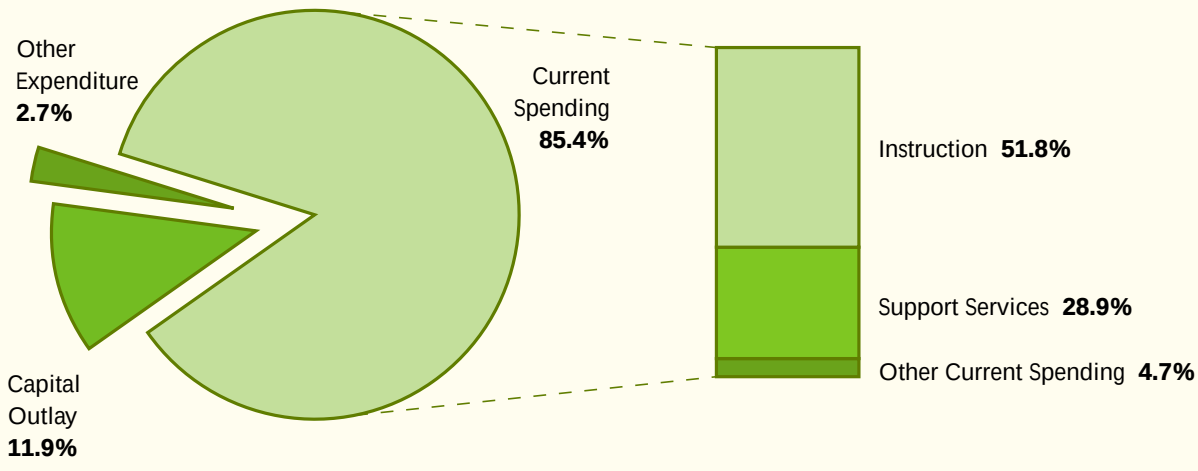
Percent distribution of Public Elementary-Secondary Education Revenue: 2000-01

TOTAL: $402.4 billion



Percent distribution of Public Elementary-Secondary Education Revenue: 2000-01

TOTAL: $410.6 billion



U.S. public education spent a total of $410.6 billion in school year 2000-01, according to *Public Education Finances 2001*, a March 2003 report from the U.S. Commerce Department's Census Bureau. Out of each public education dollar spent, 85.4 cents went for current spending, 11.9 cents went for capital outlays, and 2.7 cents went for other expenditures.

The 85.4 cents for current expenditures was made up of 51.8 cents for instruction, 28.9 cents for support services, and 4.7 cents for other current spending.

The Commerce Department publication also reported $402.4 billion in total public education revenues for 2000-01. Of each public education dollar raised, 49.9 cents came from state sources, 43.0 cents came from local sources, and 7.1 cents came from federal sources.

Total school district debt outstanding at the end of the year was $201.6 billion, roughly half of annual revenues. Fall 2000 enrollment in public schools was 47.2 million students.

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Public School Spending Will Be More Accurately Reported

Alan Bonsteel and Carl Brodt

The nation is spending more money on public education than the public has been led to believe. We have helped implement a change to the annual reporting of education statistics that will provide a much more accurate measure of total public education spending. What remains is to make such statistics available on a more timely basis.

"Brainchild of a Mad Man"

In 1999, together with Lance Izumi of the Pacific Research Institute, we helped focus attention on the difficulty of obtaining an accurate figure for per-pupil education spending in California. We pointed out that the per-pupil revenues for many school districts were much higher than the statewide figures. The recent report from Mike Antonucci's Education Intelligence Agency, showing per-pupil spending by district, confirmed that point:

- For the 2000-01 school year, current spending per pupil across the state's 1,036 school districts averaged $6,965.
- The highest-spending district, Modoc County Special Schools, spent $89,461 per pupil.
- The lowest-spending district, Gorman Elementary, spent $4,641 per pupil.
- 374 districts spent more than the state average of $6,965 per pupil.

In our 1999 report, "A Short Primer on Per-Pupil Spending in California," we suggested—because of the difficulty in obtaining and interpreting financial data—"it would be virtually impossible for the average voter ... to fulfill his or her theoretical role of holding the public schools accountable."

A recent study of categorical spending by *Sacramento Bee* writer Deb Kollars concurred, with her newspaper suggesting readers might think the system "is the brainchild of a mad man."

Bee columnist Dan Walters continued: "[T]here's precious little oversight by either the state Department of Education or the Legislature on how well the money is being spent—whether the programs are doing the intended jobs, or even comprehensive financial audits to determine whether the money is being ripped off."

Understated Spending

Although the public schools claim to be accountable to the public for "every penny" they spend, the average parent, taxpayer, or voter has little chance of determining just how much money is spent by a particular school district. In addition, the most commonly quoted figure for per-student spending in public schools—current spending per pupil—understates total spending by about $1,200 per year.

For decades, the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics has reported per-student spending in the public schools as "Current Spending." That figure provides only a partial accounting of per-student spending since it leaves out two important items: school construction costs and the interest expense on school bonds.

Although the total spending figure has always been available in the annual *Digest of Education Statistics*, the reporting focus has been on the current spending figure. As a result, this is the figure most commonly cited by the news media. For the school year 2000-01, national current spending per pupil stands at $7,284, with total spending approximately $1,200 higher.

In early 2002, our group, California Parents for Educational Choice, approached the U.S. Department of Education with a proposal for improving the way the *Digest of Education Statistics* reports per-student K-12 public education spending. Our proposal was to give more attention to total spending per student. With the Bush administration pressing for more accountability in the public schools, this proposal received a very positive reception from Russ Whitehurst, assistant secretary of education. As a result, the May 2003 issue of the *Digest of Education Statistics* will present total spending per student with more clarity.

"Although the public schools claim to be accountable to the public for 'every penny' they spend, the average parent, taxpayer, or voter has little chance of determining just how much money is spent by a particular school district."

However, even these changes fall short of the ideal, since the state-by-state table of total expenditures per pupil uses only 1999-2000 school year data—one year behind the 2000-01 data reported by the Census Bureau and four years behind current school year expenditures. Improving the timeliness of reporting should be the next area for improvement.

Dr. Alan Bonsteel is an emergency and family physician and president of California Parents for Educational Choice (CPEC); his email address is **abonsteel@earthlink.net**. *Carl Brodt, a certified management accountant, is a commercial bank vice president and treasurer of CPEC.*

SCHOOL DISTRICT DEMOGRAPHICS

The U.S. Census Bureau has made demographic data from the 2000 Census available by individual school district. The Bureau's School District Demographics System provides access to a wide variety of school district geographic and demographic data, such as population by age, race, income characteristics, etc.

The starting point to access these tables is **http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/ sdds/**.

How Much Does *Your* School District Spend?

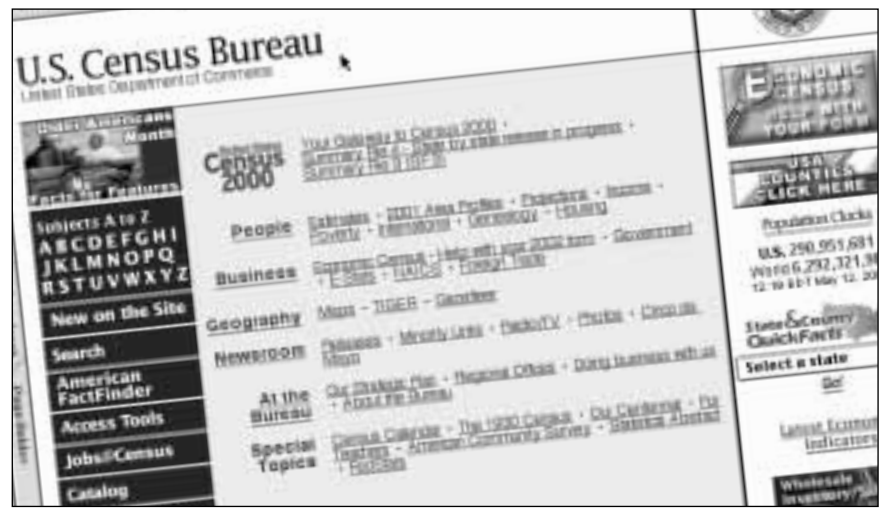
Per-pupil spending ranked in more than 14,000 districts

Michael Antonucci

In March, the U.S. Census Bureau released *Public Education Finances 2001*, a 99-page report highlighting school revenues and expenditures for the 2000-01 year. The report is a treasure trove of information, providing not only statewide averages for spending, but extensive tables for the largest school districts.

But if the Census Bureau report itself is overflowing with numbers, imagine the sheer bulk of the source data used for the report. To compute statewide average expenditures, the Census Bureau gathered financial information from each of America's nearly 15,000 local school districts. Armed with this source data, the Education Intelligence Agency has constructed a report of its own, *What Price They Will: Per-Pupil Spending & Labor Costs for More Than 14,000 Public School Districts*.

The report ranks school districts in each state on their 2000-01 per-pupil spending and includes the percentages spent on instruction, total employee compensation, and compensation for classroom personnel only. The tables also include enrollment figures for each district, so comparisons with districts of similar size can be made. Each page also contains the state and national averages in each of the above categories for easy reference.



The largest state table is 27 pages long; to print all 52 tables would require about 250 pages.

Michael Antonucci is director of the Education Intelligence Agency, which conducts public education research, analysis, and investigations. His email address is **EducationIntel@aol.com**.

INTERNET INFO

The Education Intelligence Agency's reports on each state's current spending per pupil by school district may be found online at **http://www.eiaonline.com/districts.htm**.

The March 2003 report from the U.S. Census Bureau, *Public Education Finances 2001*, is available online at **http://www.census.gov/govs/school/01fullreport.pdf**.

INTERNET INFO

The paper by Lance Izumi, Carl Brodt, and Alan Bonsteel, "A Short Primer on Per Student Spending in California," published on November 18, 1999 by the Pacific Research Institute, is available online at **www.pacificresearch.org/pub/sab/educat/per_pupil_spending/index.html**.

The *Sacramento Bee*'s six-part series on categorical aid to California public schools may be accessed online at **http://www.sacbee.com/content/news/projects/paying_for_schools/story/6075000p-7031007c.html**.

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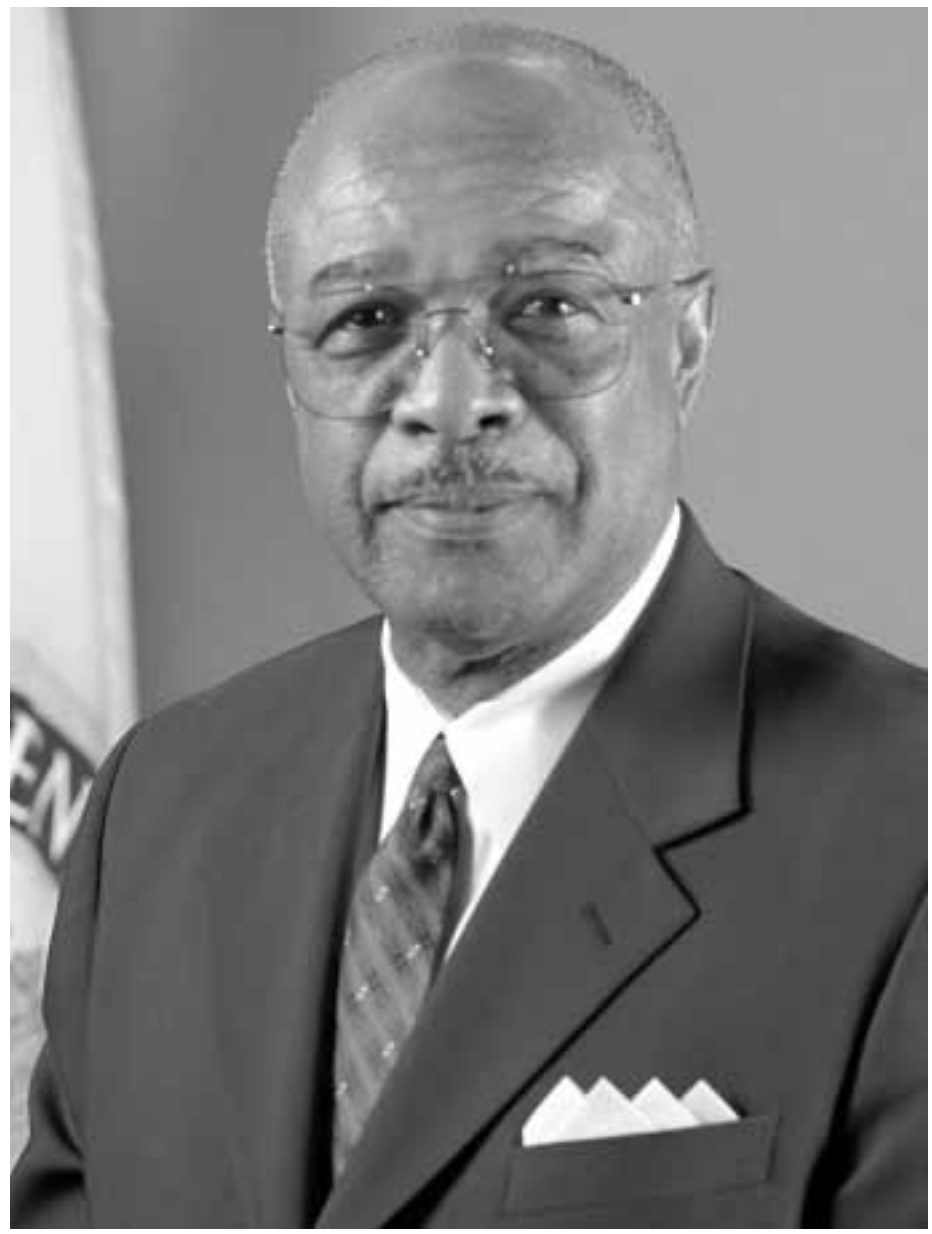
INTERVIEW

Right Man for the Job



an interview with

U.S. Education Secretary Roderick Paige

by George A. Clowes

If ever the right man got the job, it was Roderick Paige when he was appointed the seventh U.S. Secretary of Education in January 2001. As the first school superintendent to serve in this role, as well as the first African-American, Paige brings an unmatched depth of personal and career experience to the highest education post in the nation. He also brings an unmatched commitment to educate all children. To Paige, results matter, not excuses.

As Secretary of Education, Paige is leading the huge effort to implement the far-reaching reforms of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). Among those reforms are provisions for public school choice and supplemental educational services, the coordination of which Paige has assigned to the new Office of Innovation and Improvement under Nina Shokraii Rees. These school choice options are likely to have the most impact on low-income families in urban areas where large concentrations of African-Americans live—a fact recognized by school choice advocates like Howard Fuller.

"You have no greater friend than Rod Paige," Fuller told parents, educators, and activists at the 2003 Symposium of the Black Alliance for Educational Options (BAEO) in Dallas, Texas earlier this year. BAEO and NCLB both seek to empower low-income parents by expanding the educational choices available to them. Giving parents more choices strengthens public education, says Paige.

Born in Monticello, Mississippi, Paige is the son of public school educators. He earned a Bachelor's degree from Jackson State University in Mississippi and a Master's degree and doctorate from Indiana University. After distinguishing himself as a college-level athletics coach, he served for a decade as dean of the College of Education at Texas Southern University, where he established the Center for Excellence in Urban Education, a research facility focused on urban school systems.

After serving as a trustee and an officer of the Board of Education of the Houston Independent School District (HISD) from 1989 to 1994, Paige was appointed the district's superintendent in 1994 to implement the reform vision he had coauthored as a board member. Over the next six years, he transformed HISD's operations, organization, and philosophy—decentralizing operations, focusing on instruction, establishing accountability for results, and developing a core curriculum. He instituted performance contracts, teacher incentive pay, charter schools, and a school choice program to reduce overcrowding. Under his leadership, student achievement increased significantly and HISD—the nation's seventh-largest school district—became a model for urban school reform.

The recipient of numerous awards, including being named 2001 National Superintendent of the Year by the American Association of School Administrators, Paige was recognized by *Inside Houston* as one of the city's "most powerful people" in guiding Houston's growth and prosperity. During the recent celebration of National Charter Schools Week, Paige responded to questions posed by *School Reform News* Managing Editor George Clowes.

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Clowes: *Which of your previous career experiences did you find most helpful in shouldering the responsibilities of U.S. Secretary of Education?*
Paige: I have spent my whole life either studying to get a good education or working to help others do the same. I've served as a teacher, a coach, a school board member, a dean of a college school of education, and superintendent of the nation's seventh largest school district in Houston, Texas.

I'm the first school superintendent ever to serve as Secretary of Education. I believe it is the combination of all of these experiences that allows me to understand the challenges we face in meeting President Bush's bold goal of educating every single child in this great nation.

Clowes: *The No Child Left Behind law requires all schools to have highly qualified teachers by 2006. What's behind that?*
Paige: Few people have the influence over our lives that teachers do. That is why the President and I are committed

"To produce great schools worthy of a great nation, we must also change our hearts and our minds. We must let go of the myths and perceptions about who can learn and who can't."

to making sure that there is a quality teacher in every classroom by 2006.

Most of us can remember a favorite teacher. I had two favorite educators: my parents. Their example inspired me to become a teacher as well. And it was in the classroom that I discovered the truth in the words of World War II General Omar Bradley when he called teachers the real soldiers of democracy. Others may defend it, he said, but only teachers can make it work.

We must improve the way we prepare new teachers in our colleges and universities. I was a dean of a college of education for 10 years, and I know the special problems these schools face and the responsibilities they bear. But I am also mindful that the original idea behind colleges of education was to create rigorous professional training for teachers, just like medical schools and law schools. Yet here we are with research showing many teachers fresh out of college lack what they need to meet the challenges of the classroom. More than one in five will give up and leave the profession within their first three years.

Despite this, many schools of education have continued, business-as-usual, focusing heavily on how to be a teacher, when the evidence cries out for a deeper understanding of the subject they'll be teaching, how to monitor student progress, and how to help students who are falling behind.

The No Child Left Behind Act gives schools greater flexibility to use federal funds where the local need is greatest: to recruit new teachers, to improve teacher training, or to increase teacher pay in critical need areas. President Bush's 2004 budget calls on Congress to provide more than $4.5 billion to support our nation's teachers, including increased funding for teacher development to help teachers succeed, tax relief to help teachers defray expenses, and loan forgiveness for those who teach in high-need schools or subject areas.

Clowes: *What about alternate paths to becoming a certified teacher?*
Paige: To achieve our goal of a quality teacher in every classroom by 2006, we need to do two things: raise academic standards for new teachers, so they are prepared to teach our children to high levels; and remove the barriers that are keeping thousands of talented people out of the classroom.

At a time when we desperately need strong teachers in our classrooms, we should be doing all we can to attract and keep the best and the brightest candidates. A good place to start is by drawing from non-traditional sources like Teach for America, Transition to Teaching and Troops to Teachers.

Clowes: *Even with a highly qualified teacher in each classroom, some educators nevertheless believe—as one public school principal from Mesa, Arizona declared last December—"All children cannot learn." What's your response to this?*
Paige: No Child Left Behind provided the framework for change, but changing the law is just the start of reform. To produce great schools worthy of a great nation, we must also change our hearts and our minds. We must let go of the myths and perceptions about who can learn and who can't.

Anyone who's been in education as long as I have has heard all the excuses: "Those kids" are too poor. "Those kids" are too disadvantaged. We're doing the best we can with "those kids."

Our children need our help and they need it now. The President and I believe in the bright potential of every child, and the research is clear: teachers' attitudes affect student achievement. Children—no matter their race, their family income, or their zip code—show the greatest achievement gains with teachers who really *believe they can learn.*

All across our nation, thousands of schools and teachers are producing incredible results with what some call "those children." As we at the Department of Education work in partnership with the states to implement the reforms of No Child Left Behind, we have these schools to remind us that it not only can be done, it *is* being done every day.

Clowes: *The phrase "No Child Left Behind" prompts the question: "Left behind from what?" What is the aim of K-12 education in the United States?*
Paige: President Bush and I believe that education is a civil right, just like the right to vote or to be treated equally. And it's the duty of our nation to teach *every child* well, not just *some* of them. Yet in the greatest, most prosperous nation in the world, we had created two education systems—separate and unequal—that found it perfectly acceptable to teach only some students well while the rest—mostly minority and mostly low-income—floundered or flunked out.

We have already exceeded the high-tech-someday that *Nation at Risk* envisioned. We need look no further than our morning paper to see that our future—and the future of our children—is inextricably linked to the complex challenges of the global community. So in this complex and sometimes uncertain world, it is paramount that America graduate greater numbers of well-educated young people. Our future depends on them to lead the way in developing strategies and technologies that will keep us safe and prosperous for generations to come.

Clowes: *How are the public schools performing versus what we want them to achieve?*

Paige: Two decades ago, *A Nation at Risk* set off a wave of well-intentioned school reform efforts. In the ensuing decades we saw trillions of dollars, formal standards, and lots of effort applied to the problem like bleach on a tough stain. But what we didn't see was a solution.

The achievement gap grew wider. Test scores stayed flat. And a disturbing trend emerged: The longer students stayed in school, the farther behind they fell academically. And so as the years progressed, thousands more children—mostly poor and mostly minority—dropped through the cracks to uncertain futures on the margins of society.

In my years, I have seen many of the well-intentioned, well-funded efforts to close the widening achievement gap between those who have and those who don't. But in all my years, I've never seen any movement with greater potential to improve our education system than the No Child Left Behind Act. And with each budget cycle since President Bush took office, he has worked to protect our investment in our children—with historic levels of funding targeted to areas of greatest need.

Clowes: *What are the key features of the No Child Left Behind law? Why do you think NCLB will succeed where other reforms haven't?*
Paige: No Child Left Behind rests upon four pillars; local control and flexibility, research-based instruction that works, information and choice to empower parents, and accountability for results.

No Child Left Behind provides the key ingredient that was missing in all previous reform attempts: a framework for change that demands high standards and high expectations for every child in every classroom in every school.

No Child Left Behind is historic in its sweep, its funding, and its commitment to our children. Never before has this nation made the commitment to educate every child—regardless of race, family income, or zip code. And I'm proud to say that we are making good progress in implementing these monumental reforms.

For the first time in the history of public education, all states have submitted accountability plans to show how they intend to improve student achievement, keep parents informed, and provide options for children who aren't learning. And we are working hand-in-hand with the states to help ensure their success, because we know the stakes are high. One child left behind is one child too many.

This new law fundamentally changes the focus of education to the child—not the system.

Clowes: *Why is school choice such an important component of the reform strategy to improve public schools?*

"[After *A Nation at Risk*,] we saw trillions of dollars, formal standards, and lots of effort applied to the problem like bleach on a tough stain. But what we didn't see was a solution."

Paige: Choice is essential for authentic public school reform, and I'll tell you why: Ours is a highly mobile, confident nation that has the greatest range of personal choices ever in the history of mankind. Look at the world we live in: Instant messaging. 24-hour news. Personal websites. Global markets. Overnight express. eCommerce.

Every day presents new opportunities to tailor what we see, what we hear, and what we do to our own personal tastes. The world is moving toward more choice, not less. Unless you are poor. In that case, you look around and you see the rest of the country speeding into the future while you're still trying to catch up with the present.

Americans will not allow themselves to be boxed in by a monopoly. In the 21st century, choice is not the exception—it's the rule. Only in education would choice and competition be viewed as "innovative" or "radical" or "risky."

Our education system must change to reflect these times—for all parents and all children from all income levels. No Child Left Behind says we must empower parents by giving them the range of choices for their children's schooling that many have come to expect in all other parts of their lives—and that low-income parents can only dream about.

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DC School Choice Initiatives

Anthony Williams, Mayor
District of Columbia

"FOR TOO MANY YEARS, District government officials have struggled to make improvements to our school system. Despite an infusion of local funding over the past four years, we have not seen the kinds of improvements that we had hoped to see. The challenges faced by our educators are significant and longstanding.

"Parents, students, and concerned citizens are calling on our city leaders to come together to make improving our children's education our highest priority. I remain committed to working with all parties to help us in this effort. To that end, I have been working with Board of Education President Peggy Cooper Cafritz and Councilman Kevin Chavous to develop a means for the federal government to bolster its support of our education system. In that spirit, I welcome the Bush administration's support for our efforts.

"We are working closely with all parties to seize this landmark opportunity for the federal government to address the serious needs of our public schools and our public charter schools and to provide scholarships for some students to attend nonpublic independent and parochial schools. This is about helping *all* of our children wherever they go to school.

"We need additional resources to help our successful charter schools address their facilities concerns and provide the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) with a permanent funding stream to help meet the state and local costs borne by our school system. In addressing our burden of state-level costs, the federal government will help us redirect local revenues towards the important reforms that are underway in DCPS. We must seek every opportunity to do what is best for our children and join forces with educators in private and parochial, regular public, and charter schools as well as supporters at all levels of government.

"Let me be very clear in saying that, to be fully successful, any federally funded program that provides scholarships for private schools must be balanced with direct assistance to DCPS and with additional funding for charter schools in the District.

"I recognize that there will be vocal opponents to this 'three sector approach,' but I believe that we can find common ground on the need to increase funding for our public school system, continue the expansion of our best-in-the-nation charter school system, increase choices for parents on where to educate their children, and oppose efforts in the Congress to impose a vouchers-only program on the District."

Center for Education Reform

A student from Community Academy Public Charter School introduces U.S. Education Secretary Rod Paige at the celebration of National Charter Schools Week on May 1 in Washington, DC.

DC Vouchers

continued from page 1

school vouchers as well.

Williams, previously on record as opposing vouchers, declared his commitment to working "on a balanced approach to school choice" with the Bush administration, including U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige, the day's keynote speaker.

Norton Deserted by Colleagues

This unprecedented, collective embrace of private school vouchers—in a strongly Democratic city, from top Democratic leaders—marks a near-total reversal from prior federal attempts to enact school voucher legislation for the District of Columbia.

The District's Delegate to Congress, Eleanor Holmes Norton, later expressed shock and anger at her colleagues' defiance of traditional Democratic orthodoxy and complained the move flouts "home rule," a strongly held value in a city not represented by voting members of Congress.

"I have been listening to the frustrations of parents, who do not have another one or two or more years to wait for every [public] school to perform."

Peggy Cooper Cafritz
DC School Board President

But the Mayor and other leaders say the long-troubled education system desperately needs a shake-up and redesign. Cafritz, who stunned local voucher opponents several weeks ago with her sudden reversal on the voucher question, emphasized she has been "listening to the frustrations of parents, who do not have another one or two or more years to wait for every [public] school to perform."

Williams and Chavous echoed the urgent need to provide DC students with more school options, but noted their support for federally funded vouchers is contingent on Congress increasing federal funding for the city's traditional public and charter schools too.

In particular, they would like to see the federal government pick up the "state-level" tab for DC's exorbitant special education costs and enhance funding for DC's charter school program, which enjoys strong local, bipartisan support but has slowed in growth in recent years, mostly due to difficulties in facilities financing.

Center for Education Reform

The Charter School Community of the District of Columbia presents U.S. Education Secretary Rod Paige with a plaque in appreciation of his leadership on behalf of advancing charter schools.

New Charter Association Launched

The primary intent of the May 1 event, held at the Community Academy Public Charter School, was to announce a new association of DC charter schools that "will help make our city's already thriving charter school movement even stronger," according to one of its founding leaders, Irasema Salcido, head of the Cesar Chavez Public Charter High School for Public Policy.

Salcido was joined by Community Academy's founder, Kent Amos, and Don Hense, the head of Friendship House, which operates four charter schools in the District. Leaders from 25 DC charter schools represented the new association, which presented Paige with a plaque in appreciation of his support for the charter school movement.

The goals of the new association are "to advocate for the needs of DC charter schools in a strong and united voice" and "to provide charter schools access to services, resources, and information critical to their effectiveness in delivering a quality education."

The potential combination of an enhanced charter school program in DC—it already serves more than 15 percent of local public school students—and a new private school voucher program could at last provide the pressure needed to force improvements in the city's beleaguered public schools, explained Chavous.

"This new willingness of local leadership to embrace change could at last make the nation's capital the nation's model of effective K-12 education," he told *School Reform News*.

Parents with students in local public schools seem to agree.

"I applaud what they're doing," said Victoria Harris, whose family of eight includes foster and adopted children in addition to her own. "I would use vouchers so my kids would have a better chance for college, and get to experience different environments."

She warned, however, that her support for vouchers is conditional on local leaders "making sure that they only serve the poor kids who really need them."

Kelly Amis Stewart is an education consultant and co-author of Making it Count: A Guide to High-Impact Education Philanthropy *with Chester E. Finn Jr. Her email address is* **KLAmis@aol.com**.

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U.S. Manufacturers Suffer from Ill-Prepared Students

continued from page 1

is calling for a "National Manufacturing Day," when manufacturers would open their plants and facilities to young people, teachers, and parents. In this way, people could see modern manufacturing plants and today's manufacturing jobs have little in common with the manufacturing environments they are most familiar with—those depicted on television shows like "Roseanne" and "Laverne and Shirley."

The new NAM study also shows the U.S. educational system to be "a weak link" between young people and the career opportunities emerging for them in today's economy. The U.S. sends more than 70 percent of its high school graduates to four-year colleges, but half of them drop out. For those who do graduate, one-third fail to find employment requiring a four-year degree. At the same time, well-paid manufacturing jobs, including those requiring two-year technical degrees or skill certificates from shorter programs at community colleges, remain unfilled.

An earlier NAM report, "The Skills Gap 2001," indicated even high school graduates interested in manufacturing jobs are not receiving the kind of skills training necessary to compete in a high-tech environment. Almost four out of five (78 percent) manufacturers believed K-12 schools are not doing a good job of preparing students for the workplace. The most serious deficiencies cited were in basic employability skills—attendance, timeliness, and work ethic—as well as in math, problem solving, and communication.

Today's Manufacturing Sector

Although the U.S. manufacturing sector has suffered 32 consecutive months of job losses—more than 2 million positions in all—businesses are likely to expand employment again as the economy recovers. But when that happens, the supply of skilled workers won't be sufficient to keep up with demand, according to the report, "Keeping America Competitive: How a Talent Shortage Threatens U.S. Manufacturing," produced jointly by NAM, The Manufacturing Institute, and Deloitte & Touche.

More than 80 percent of manufacturers reported a "moderate to serious" shortage of qualified job applicants when polled for NAM's 2001 report. The new study was undertaken to identify the reasons behind the shortfall and also to determine why fewer young people were interested in pursuing careers in manufacturing.

"To continue to succeed, U.S. manufacturers must compete on product design, productivity, flexibility, quality, and responsiveness to customer needs," said Dick Gabrys, vice chairman and global manufacturing leader for Deloitte & Touche. "These competitive mandates put a high premium on a wide range of skills needed to keep up with advancing technology in every aspect of manufacturing—from design and production to delivery and service."

Manufacturing accounts for a full 22 percent of GDP, the report explains, and every $1 million in manufacturing sales supports eight other jobs in manufacturing and six jobs in other sectors. In addition, while the general economy grew at an average of 3.6 percent a year during the 1990s, the manufacturing sector grew at an annual rate of 4.6 percent.

"The shortage for jobs requiring at least some degree of post-secondary education or training is projected to exceed 10 million by 2020."

"Today's manufacturing company is a major source of high-tech innovation, wealth creation and ... opportunity," notes the report. "Manufacturing's varied jobs and careers averaged $54,000 in total compensation in 2000—20 percent higher than the average of all American workers—while 83.7 percent of manufacturing employees receive health benefits from their employers, more than any other sector except government."

Negative Perceptions

But the study's researchers found the public perception of manufacturing to be much less attractive. Across a wide spectrum of respondents, the image of the manufacturing sector was seen to be heavily loaded with negative connotations. Respondents associated manufacturing with "frequent news reports of accounting scandals, layoffs, jobs moving offshore, pollution, plant closures, and labor-management conflicts." Worse still, manufacturing was perceived as being part of the "old economy," in rapid decline and moving to Third World countries.

"Things just aren't seen as made in America anymore," one respondent said. Students, parents, educators, and manufacturing executives all wondered why one should seek a career in manufacturing if it is "not going to be there for long."

Students frequently cited TV sitcoms such as "Laverne & Shirley," "I Love Lucy," and "Roseanne" as having negatively influenced their view of manufacturing. Other respondents noted the absence of TV programs or movies showing manufacturing professionals in attractive settings. "Manufacturing" generally connoted "assembly line," rather than calling to mind one of manufacturing's many highly skilled positions such as engineer, product manager, designer, or R&D professional.

"Roseanne worked in a factory," said one Los Angeles college student. "It provided for some funny episodes, but not a good image for manufacturing as a career choice."

Many adults and educators also have simplistic views of manufacturing. When asked about a career in manufacturing for their children, one parent said she "thinks of the sweat shops of the Kathy Lee clothing line." She wouldn't want her daughter to work for a company like that, even as an executive.

"The manufacturing jobs I've seen, you don't need a fourth-grade education for," commented a K-8 educator from Alabama. "I wouldn't recommend a career in manufacturing to any of these college-bound kids."

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Skill Wars

In his 1999 book, *Skill Wars: Winning the Battle for Productivity and Profit*, management consultant Edward E. Gordon warns America's current economic supremacy could be compromised by poor quality education. Unless our public schools are reinvented, Gordon predicts, unskilled U.S. workers risk becoming "the techno-peasants of the information age."

"Nearly seven out of 10 employers say high school graduates lack the skills to succeed at work, according to a 1998 Public Agenda report."

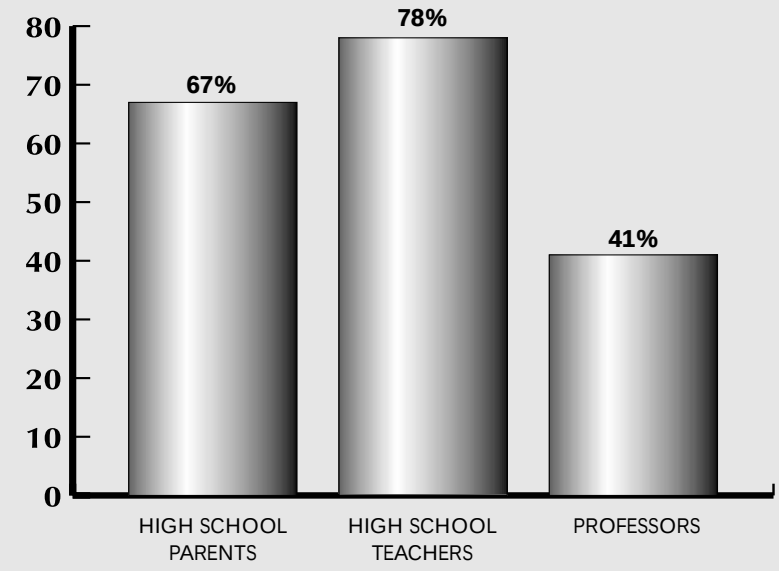
The knowledge-based economy of today requires a public education system that produces graduates who are better-educated and more technically savvy than prior generations. But that's not happening, says Gordon, and surveys bear him out.

The National Association of Manufacturers reported in 1998 that 40 percent of all 17-year-olds lacked the math skills to hold down a production job at a manufacturing plant, and 60 percent lacked the reading skills.

Nearly seven out of 10 employers say high school graduates lack the skills to succeed at work, according to a 1998 Public Agenda report. Public Agenda's annual *Reality Check* reports also that only 41 percent of employers—compared to 78 percent of teachers and 67 percent of parents—think public school graduates have the skills to succeed in the work world.

Are Students Prepared For The Future?

% who believe public school graduates [will] have the skills to succeed in the work world



INTERNET INFO

The April 2003 report from the National Association of Manufacturers, The Manufacturing Institute, and Deloitte & Touche—"Keeping America Competitive: How a Talent Shortage Threatens U.S. Manufacturing"—is available online at **www.nam.org/careers** and **www.deloitte.com/us/manufacturing**.

The four-page summary and 37-page full report are also available through *PolicyBot*. Point your Web browser to **http://www.heartland.org**, click on the *PolicyBot* icon, and search for documents **#12197** (summary) and **#12196** (full report).

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JUST THE FACTS

NAEP Reports Reading and Writing Scores

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is a continuing nationwide assessment of what America's students know and can do in various subject areas. Since 1969, assessments have been conducted periodically in reading, mathematics, science, writing, U.S. history, civics, geography, and the arts.

Reading
The latest NAEP scores for reading are for 2000; to date, only the results for fourth-graders have been released. These show little change from earlier scores or achievement levels. NAEP's 1999 summary of long-term trends in reading showed only a slight improvement in reading scores over the three decades from 1971 to 1999.

In the 1998 NAEP reading assessment, the percentages of students performing at or above the Proficient level in grades 4, 8, and 12 were 31, 33, and 40 percent respectively. In other words, approximately two-thirds of U.S. students cannot read proficiently.

Writing
In the 1998 NAEP writing assessment, the percentages of students performing at or above the Proficient level in grades 4, 8, and 12 were 23, 27, and 22 percent respectively. In other words, approximately three-quarters of U.S. students cannot write proficiently.

In NAEP terms, proficiency represents "solid academic performance for each grade assessed. Students reaching this level have demonstrated competency over challenging subject matter, including subject-matter knowledge, application of such knowledge to real-world situations, and analytical skills appropriate to the subject matter."

Trends in Average Scale Scores for the Nation in Reading

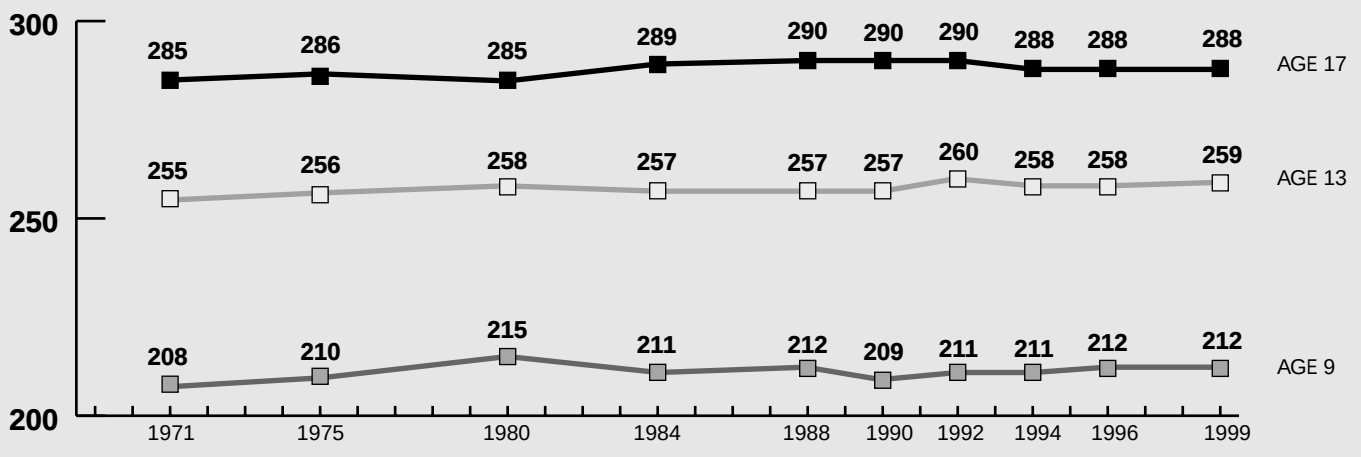

Figure 1.1, NAEP 1999 Trends in Academic Progress: Reading Scores
*** Significantly different from 1999.**
Source: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 1999 Long-Term Trend Assessment.
http://www.nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/reading/trendsnational.asp

Reading Is at the Forefront of Local Education Policy

Robert Holland

The new federal push for schools to ensure their programs of instruction are based on valid science is lending urgency to an old debate over the best way to teach reading. Many school systems are learning that federal approval of their Reading First funding applications is no sure thing.

Reading First is part of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 and carries a $6 billion commitment from the Bush administration. It succeeds the Reading Excellence Act, administered during the Clinton administration. During the Clinton years, *Baltimore Sun* columnist Mike Bowler has observed, "states dressed up tired old [reading] programs and saw them sail through the federal approval process."

Today, localities face tough sailing if they expect programs lacking scientific validity to attract federal funding. Secretary of Education Rod Paige and his Education Department have returned numerous reading proposals marked "F" or "incomplete."

During Reading First's debut year, only 27 state programs gained federal approval. Almost all of those came only after initial rejections.

Maryland's Proposal Rejected
Maryland is a recent example. Although the state's overall NCLB accountability plan won approval and praise from Paige, its Reading First proposal bounced, with calls from Washington for further work. At stake is $175,000 for each of 50 schools to beef up their reading instruction and teacher training.

Although nothing in federal law stipulates a reading instruction method, the landmark report of the National Reading Panel in April 2000 found—after reviewing 100,000 research studies conducted since 1966—that children must be taught phonemic awareness and phonics skills in order to become good readers. The Panel also stressed teaching the applied skills of fluent reading and comprehension.

"During Reading First's debut year, only 27 state programs gained federal approval. Almost all of those came only after initial rejections."

Bush's reading advisor, G. Reid Lyon of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, which sponsored the Panel's work, frequently stresses the imperative of phonemic awareness and phonics.

Maryland's state school superintendent, Nancy Grasmick, professed not to be upset at the rejection of her reading proposal, "because we know all of the other states were rejected the first time. We're going back to the drawing board optimistically."

Whole Language Cloaked as Phonics
Controversy erupted over New York's Reading First proposal when schools Chancellor Joel Klein announced a program called "Month by Month Phonics" would be mandated in most of the Big Apple's public elementary schools. Despite its name, the program is based on the Whole Language approach—discredited by scientific research—and contains only a smattering of phonics, according to Sol Stern of *City Journal* and other critics.

Given the likelihood of a federal rejection, Mayor Michael Bloomberg—who controls the New York City schools under a state law passed last year—quickly announced Month by Month would be supplemented with a phonics-based program developed by Dallas-based Voyager Expanded Learning. That program was used by Paige when he was superintendent of the Houston public schools.

Thus, it is likely New York City will get its $68 million in federal reading aid. However, noted Stern, "a lot of that money will be wasted as teachers in the elementary schools will have to be trained to work with not one but two new reading programs."

Under their contract, teachers don't show up until a few days before pupils arrive for classes in September. The situation will be chaotic, Stern predicted, "as untrained teachers juggle two new programs and try to figure out which students should get phonics lite and which should get the real McCoy."

***Orlando Sentinel* Initiative**
Not all communities are waiting for blessings from Washington. In Florida, the *Orlando Sentinel* has launched an ambitious project called Reading by Nine. Over a period of several years, the newspaper will be devoting comprehensive coverage to reading and following the work of teachers dedicated to raising levels of literacy.

In introducing one of its most recent reports, the paper noted "one out of every three of our fourth-graders can barely read a book written for second-graders. Almost half of Central Florida's 9-year-olds are reading below acceptable standards. Research shows that until the age of 9, children learn how to read. After that, they read to learn. ... Our hope is that by shining a spotlight on this issue, we can help find solutions that will benefit our community—and our children."

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INTERNET INFO

Information on the *Orlando Sentinel*'s Reading by Nine program is available from the newspaper's Web sit at **http://www.orlandosentinel.com/features/booksmags/orl-readingbynine.storygallery**.

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